



*Olive Nevins 25 '01*

# LITERARY

## THE ABSENT MINDED PROFESSOR

(First Prize Story)

To the Professor's mind, the world was a sphere created for the purpose of harboring insects. Of, course, the Professor acknowledged the existence of other things—animals (human and otherwise), birds, fishes, trees, and a multiplicity of similar side-issues; he even knew in a hazy way that sun, moon, and stars gave the needed light. He knew that these things existed, but they meant nothing to him.

The Professor had a faithful, helpful, and unusually patient wife who kept her thoughts to herself and did not nag when he forgot his meals, his engagements, and sometimes even his collar and tie in his absorption in a new kind of bug, beetle, or butterfly.

Students were a necessary part of his life, of course; otherwise the college that provided his living would not have been established, and in the arduous chase after new species one must keep up his strength by eating, and to eat, one must make money to buy food. But his classes were only a sea of faces changing from year to year; whereas a specimen pinned to a cork was a joy forever.

The woods back of the college properties were his happy hunting grounds. Here, when his classes were dismissed and the weather permitted, he lived his true life. The webbing on the wing of a moth was the cause of greater excitement to him than the election of a president. "The world forgetting, by the world forgot," his spirit reveled in the realm of bugdom, and his days were complete and contented.

But one day when he was wandering in the wood on the trail of an elusive beetle, the Professor's eyes were attracted by something glittering at his feet. He stooped, his mind still on the beetle, and picked up a ring—a plain gold band with a forget-me-not of turquoises. For a moment the Professor was struck with a sense of familiarity, but a movement in the grass diverted his attention; so dropping the ring into his pocket, he pursued his prey. He thought nothing more of the ring until the next day, when waiting for his mail at the post office, he drew out his handkerchief, and the ring fell to the floor. A lady behind him called his attention to it, but as he looked at her in a puzzled manner and made no move, she herself picked it up. "Upon my word," she cried, "that looks like Mrs. Fay's ring. Where did you get it, sir?"

Momentarily jolted out of his abstraction, the Professor glanced at the object in her hand, then looked more closely and said, "That is a ring I gave my wife years ago," and without further ceremony dropped it into his pocket and went his way.

Never bothering his learned head about current events, he knew nothing of the robbery at Mrs. Fay's house, did not even know that the rich widow had rented a house in the college town for the benefit of her son. The town had been buzzing about the crime for days while the detectives were at a loss for a clue. Had it been a bee or wasp buzzing, the Professor might have been interested.

Now a new note was added. The staid Professor had in his possession one of the stolen articles! It was inconceivable. What should be done? At last it was agreed that a committee, consisting of the local banker, a detective, and the college president, should make discreet inquiries. They were led into the house by the Professor's wife, who then went to call her husband. He was entirely absorbed in the delicate task of mounting his captured beetle and paid little heed to her.

"Come," she said gently, "Mr. Haines and Mr. Black and the President want to see you on important business. Can't you let the beetle go for a while?"

"He can't go, my dear; he is dead. That is evidently what they want to see. They have heard that I—."

"Perhaps that is so. You had better come down and find out."

"Very well, my dear." So the Professor reluctantly followed her into the presence of his three solemn visitors. He greeted them cordially and began, "You have heard of it already?"

"We have," said the banker, "and we are here to hear more of it."

"Why, it's a very rare specimen of the—"

But the banker rudely interrupted, "Specimen be—"

The President shook his head and said solemnly, "Professor, we have heard that a certain ring was seen in your possession, and while we cannot believe you to be guilty of dishonesty, we are here to demand an explanation."

The Professor looked blankly from one to the other. "A ring?" he queried.

"At the post office it fell from your pocket."

Memory stirred faintly. "I believe I did have a ring, but—" He put his hand into his pocket and brought forth the tell-tale article.

"That answers the description," cried the detective. "Where did you get it?"

The Professor brought his mind to bear strongly on this, to him, trivial matter. "Why, that is a ring I gave my wife before we were married."

"Oh, no," said his greatly puzzled wife, "think again. I have never had a ring like that."

"Why, of course, you have. We were down by the lake, and I remember telling you that the stones were blue just like your eyes."

"But my eyes aren't blue, dear; they're black, you know, and I never went to a lake with you."

"Well, well," murmured the Professor, "then it must have been Laura."

"Laura? I haven't heard you speak of Laura before. Who was she?" asked the wife, still more puzzled.

"Why, Laura was a young lady I used to know who afterwards married a railroad man named Fay."

"But where the Dickens did you get Mrs. Fay's ring?" demanded the banker.

"Think, man, think," begged the President.

The Professor, thus adjured, rubbed his head, gazed about, and thought of his unmounted beetle. That brought it home to him. "Why, I found it close to where I captured my beetle. You really must see my—"

The banker seized him by the wrists, "Can you show us the spot where you found your precious beetle?"

The Professor brightened immediately. "Why, certainly I can. That's easy, because the earth had recently been dug up—"

"Enough!" cried the three. "Let's go."

There was no hesitation now. The entomologist knew where his prize had come from and led them directly to the spot. His audience did not care to listen to the details of the capture. They dug feverishly at the foot of the tree where the earth had been disturbed. The Professor wandered away seeking something more interesting than the mere unearthing of stolen jewels.

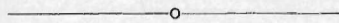
"My dear," said the Professor a few days later, "I have certainly done Sheriff Jones a great injustice. I never guessed that he was a lover of scientific subjects. He came to me today and handed me a check for five hundred dollars."

"What for?" queried his wife.

"Well, my dear, to tell the truth, I don't know. As soon as I saw the check, I thought of that new microscope I've wanted so much. He said something about a reward. It is very gratifying to feel that my services to science are appreciated by the common people. It must have been for that last article on the hind leg of the house fly. Well, I'll buy the instrument I need and a set of books."

And so he mused on. All the while his wife was thinking how much she needed a new stove and a carpet, but being a wise and understanding woman, she said nothing.

—Gladys Stephens.



### A PROMISE OF PEACE

This war-sick world of strife is weary worn  
When every scientific art is spent;  
And mighty brains at last to peace are lent,  
Though many aching hearts are now forlorn,  
Since all the bravest sons from home were torn,  
And new made loves and old asunder rent,  
And weary backs with work and war are bent.  
In every shattered home new hope is born,  
For in the sky, still shining, is God's love  
With rosy radiance of pink and gold  
Reflected in the setting of the sun,—  
A promise sent to us from those above  
Who found at last the quiet of the fold  
The promise of a better day to come.

Note: This sonnet is based on the old superstition that a bright, beautiful sunset betokens better weather on the morrow.

—Catherine Humphreys.

## THE COUGHING ARTIST

### (Second Prize Story)

When Martha Ruggles stepped off the boat at Sydney, Australia, she looked around in amazement. There was not a kangaroo or cannibal in sight. Instead, a great sprawling city straddled over the harbor sides. But when Martha had been in "the land of upside-down" for a year, she decided it was a very queer place indeed. Sunshine, hard, bright sunshine, every day—Martha began to get very homesick for the murky fogs and sleety autumns of London.

And then Joe Liggett happened along. Joe was a truck driver at the government wheat yards, and Martha met him at the lorrymen's picnic at Clontarf. It was love at first sight, especially when Joe learned that Martha was cook at the Admiralty House. That was real society, if you like. When they had been out three times, Joe said to Martha,

"How about it, kiddo?"

And Martha didn't reply, "Whaddya mean?" She said, very cleverly and without any silly shyness, "Righto!"

Joe and Martha were married. Now this is Archie's story from this point. Archie was Martha's brother, whom she had left in the old country valiantly working at the arduous job of painting dolls' faces. Perhaps that is where and how Archie developed asthma. Just as soon as Martha was settled in her new cottage with Joe, she talked about sending for Archie. Considering that it was Martha who had paid the bulk of the purchase money on the cottage, Joe did not think it would be discreet to demur about getting Archie out. He had seen his picture and thought that he could use him to advantage by putting him to some useful work such as keeping the yard in order or painting the fence occasionally.

In due course Archie arrived. Joe was disappointed in his brother-in-law. Archie had been told that Australia was a land flowing with milk and honey, and he was willing to sit around the house till the milk flowed his way and the honey trickled from above.

He had an affliction, too, an exceedingly distressing cough, which on the slightest provocation, such as Joe's asking him when he intended to get a job, jerked up in his throat and gave a fair semblance of strangling him. Joe suspected that Archie had this cough well trained, since it did not seem to trouble him when he lay out in the hammock on Sunday and dozed till lunch time. When it was time to wash the dishes, Archie was usually seized with such severe paroxysms that Martha would lead him outside to the hammock again and get him settled under the trees. On these occasions Joe fixed up the kitchen for Martha, washed the dishes, and swept the back porch.

Both Martha and Joe dreaded Archie's coughing fits. And Joe got in the habit of running round to the corner sooner than hear his brother-in-law rehearsing the life and death cry of a Ford car. Archie's cough was no short, sharp explosion. It was a long, wheezy, dreadful sounding tempest, such as that of a strangulated sirocco, like the magnified sound in the pipe stem when grandpa cleared his pipe. Its force would send Archie clutching at the air and leave him limp and purple.

When Archie could no longer extend his rest in the Liggett cottage and keep on friendly terms with his brother-in-law, he sulkily agreed to look for a job. Joe forestalled his fruitless search by signing him up as elevator boy at the People's Insurance Building. It was light work and called for a change of scenery only, since Archie put forth practically the same exertion at the elevator as he did at home. After two weeks, Archie came home and said he had been sacked. His employers were "sorry to lose him," and in fact gave him two weeks' pay in lieu of notice, but his dreadful cough disturbed the passengers so much that they preferred to walk ten flights of stairs sooner than listen and view the results of Archie's malady.

It seemed all right to Archie to work two weeks for four weeks' pay, and before long he had embarked on the very lucrative practice. First a job as salesman in a haberdashery store resulted in three weeks at work, and then he was regretfully laid off, with an extra week's compensation instead of notice. A short sojourn as usher in a movie house followed and a similar enforced farewell. Archie found himself getting rich. But with each successive job Joe became more morose. Soon he forbore entirely to talk to Archie, and even Martha could not restore his boyish good-humor and naive optimism. In short, Archie's cough and Archie's guile were driving Joe to distraction. He wanted to murder Martha's brother, but knew he would surely hang and would not reap the fruit of his noble deed to mankind.

But Archie did not lose his good humor nor his bright, friendly attitude toward Joe and his sister. Therefore, when Joe proposed that he and Archie take a little holiday together, his brother-in-law cheerfully accepted. But Joe would not trust Archie to carry any of the luggage. They went to a mountain resort, and Joe tended his companion as tenderly as any nurse might. It was a fine imposing resort that Archie found himself in. He couldn't quite understand Joe's generosity, but he was willing to accept things as they were when they contributed to his physical and mental comfort.

At the end of a week, during which time they walked, rode, danced and fished, Joe spoke of going home. Archie, too, had had enough of this vacation, ideal though it was. He hadn't coughed once, which made it very pleasant for all concerned. But he was unhappily surprised when Joe told him that only one of them was to leave.

"Why, what's the idea?" said the amazed Archie. "I ain't taking no one-man honeymoon in this hole in the woods."

"Archie," said Joe, solemnly, but not without a slight twist to the corner of his mouth, "you might as well know it now—this place is a sanitarium. Now you're going to be a good boy, and do everything nursie tells you while I'm away, and we'll soon have that nasty old cough out of you. Bye-bye." And he was gone, leaving the stunned Archie to gather slowly the real import of his words.

It was indeed a sanitarium, and soon the fiendishness of Joe's plan was brought home to Archie. He was taking a cure, but what a cure, exercise, diet, enforced sleep when he felt like dancing, walking when he wanted to rest. At the end of three months the doctor released Archie and gave him a clean certificate of health.

He came back to Joe and Martha, but his cough was gone forever. He did not last long, however. He went back to London three months later, a blighted and blasted soul. His cough, his cherished cough was gone; his chief means of livelihood was taken away. He had raised hundreds of pounds by that cough; it was the quickest heart toucher he knew. And now he was completely ruined. He couldn't cough if he wanted to.

The doctor told Joe it was perfectly simple. Archie's cough was due to a peculiar twist in the vocal cord, and Archie had found his freak wheeze one day when he was playing. He could call it into being whenever he pleased, and he pleased often, much too often for Joe's peace of mind. By an ingenious and simple little operation, the surgeon had straightened Archie's wanton cord, straightened it so much that Archie's voice took on a sweeter tone, and he was impotent forever as a coughing artist.

—Marshall Turner.

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“THE GIFT OF SONG”

(Honorable Mention)  
For Poetry

“Oh, give to me the gift of song!”  
So prayed the student oft and long:  
And turned his eyes to ancient verse and story,  
Seeking in vain for inspiration's glory.

Yet not for him the moment rare—  
He read, he wrote—and still the page was bare!

Not far away, a youth of sweet, grave mien,  
Each day among the sylvan dells was seen:  
On forest paths he met the graceful muse,  
And knew her not—nor thereby did he lose.

For from his lips ecstatic song forth burst—  
Men loved the poet and the thoughts he versed.

Poetry, you see—'tis hid  
Bright foliage and flowers amid:  
Who seeks the least the most is like to find;  
'Tis to the heart revealed; not conquered by the mind!

—Alberta Reibenstein.

*Alberta A. Reibenstein*

## THE ESCAPE (Third Prize Story)

The prisoner reached the top of the wall. Crouching there, he lifted his head ever so slightly and with instinctive caution made a hasty survey of the inside of the prison yard. Then with the agility of a weasel, he glided over and sought safety in the shadows beneath.

He had planned well, he reflected, as he ran along. His absence would not be noticed until the seven o'clock check-in; and he would be far away by the time the prison siren sounded the alarm of an escaped prisoner. A farmer's clothes-line would provide a change of clothing, and all going well, he would be in the city by the time the alarm was sounded. Then to see Jimmy Jr., his baby boy, for the first time, and Mary, the squarest little wife in the state.

It was late when he reached the street where Mary and he had courted, married, and rented their "hole in the wall" from the old Jewish proprietor. Jimmy Sr. could still see the black velveteen cap, green with age, that the old Yiddisher wore perched on top of his ebony-black hair. Jimmy must look out for him and Conlin, the "square toes" on that beat.

But what was the matter? A crowd of ill-dressed men and slatternly appearing women were mulling around at the door of his tenement. Old Flat-foot, the cop, was there, too; so Jimmy stepped inside a doorway to wait until the crowd abated. After a time it grew smaller, and he was able to slip in and up the stairs to the room where Mary and Junior were. The light was burning, but no noise came from the room. He wondered if anything had happened to her and whether the crowd downstairs knew about it.

But he braved himself to knock timidly at the door and stand there. He thought of Mary and Junior in the fleeting seconds before the door opened. He wondered whether she would be glad to see him and how big Junior was. The opening of the door broke his train of thought, and he found himself staring at the black-bearded visage of a total stranger.

By an effort of will, he managed to articulate the words, "Is Mary Ryan in?"

"Don't know her!" replied the black beard. "Do-you, Mother?" and he addressed a woman within who appeared to be his wife.

"She lived here. Had a baby boy," volunteered Jimmy Senior.

"Oh, her with the kid," recollected the man.

"Naw! She skipped out with a drummer from Chi. Said she wasn't go'nna lose out waiting for her con husband to get out of stir. Any way, what do you want to know about her for?"

"I'm just a friend, just a friend," murmured Jimmy Senior. "Thanks. Good-bye."

He stumbled down the stairs and out into the street, his eyes blinded with the tears he could not shed. He staggered on, little caring for the people he bumped into or the muttered oaths that marked his trail.

Before him was the district station house, and with one last trace of sanity remaining, he pushed open the door and walked in. The desk sergeant turned, pencil in hand, to write down the supposed complaint. In a toneless voice, with the monotonous accent of a clock ticking away the moments, the convict said,

"I'm Jim Ryan. I just escaped from up the river." Then, holding out his wrists for the bracelets, "What are you going to do about it?"

—Harry Devereaux.



## THE EXPLOSION

(Honorable Mention)

It was a sweltering day in mid-August. Inside the engine room the heat was oppressive, and the monotonous hum of the hoist was interrupted only by an occasional jangling of the signal bell. Seated near the shaft was a small, drowsy-looking boy, evidently of ten or twelve. From time to time he edged slowly over to the water barrel, took a deep draught, and then lay down in the dull shade to the right of the fuming opening.

To all appearances, Willie had no more energy in him than the mangy dogs who lay basking in the sun. But Willie was not to be judged by appearances. He was meditating on things far removed from laziness. He had been forbidden, not an hour since, to go out of sight of his home on the hill behind the mine. Now, everyone who has undergone the experience knows how pleasant it is to loiter around a baking mine on a hot summer's day when a fine swimming hole is not a mile distant.

This was the cause of Willie's meditation: if he could not go swimming, how was he to get excitement—the primary desire of his young career?

While he was thus pondering, the skip let out two miners who emptied their miners lamps and walked on to the bunkhouse. Willie lazily regarded the emptied carbide sizzling on the damp ground. There was nothing new about its actions; Willie had seen the same thing many times before; yet he gave a start, and a close observer might have detected a fleeting smile. He sidled along carefully to the rear window of the powder magazine and squirmed through.

Again a close observer might have noticed a small gray figure, with a can labeled "KEEP IN A DRY PLACE" under its arm, crawl out of the powder house and steal over to a shallow pool of water. Willie put his hand into his pocket and pulled forth a broken match. The fleeting smile changed into a wide grin.

A few moments later, from behind a shrub on the hillside, a certain small boy was watching a crowd of men gathering around a certain shallow pool from which a cloud of black smoke was mounting to the sky. The small boy chuckled; he had had his excitement. From the bottom of his young heart he thanked the miners for emptying their carbide lamps near him.

—Douglas Fuller.

## IN SECRET PLACES

(First Prize Poem)

Up in the meadows when soft winds go  
Where the earliest March green grasses grow,  
When the pussy willows begin to blush  
At the wooing of the first glad thrush,  
When the sunbeams spin the fairy gold  
That lures the ferns from the leafy mold,  
Then early on some new blown morn  
The tender buds of spring are born.  
The fragile petals lift the hoods  
That gave them shelter in the woods,  
And tiny leaves soft-curved and new  
Unfold their vernal charm and hue.  
Then azure lupin fresh and frail,  
Slender cream cups tall and pale,  
Violets hidden sweet and blue  
Are but the dreams of spring come true.  
And in their fragrant beauty lies  
The perfumed joy of paradise.

Down by the waters where grey gulls call  
To the high blue silence over all,  
Where white-winged clouds content to stay  
Mirror their loveliness in the bay,  
Where gypsy ships with sails set free  
Forget the shore and drift to sea,  
There emerald crests of proud waves ride,  
Only to break and return with the tide,  
With restless dreams that never cease  
And give their maddened victims peace.  
What great distress perturbs this sea  
Beneath the sky's serenity?  
Beyond the flowered dunes of life,  
Must there be always desperate strife  
And helplessness, as are the waves  
Of emerald tide but bondage slaves?  
But still they rise with booming roar,  
With frenzied longing for the shore,  
With fallen hopes once high and grand  
Seek comfort on the silver sand.

Out in the sky when the **zenith blue**  
Opens the gates and the sun rides through,  
When twilight robed in **her perfumed gown**  
Softly flings the shadows round,  
And earth below in misty gloom  
Silhouettes the purple bloom,  
When little night winds romp and play,  
**Far o'er the sea day slips away.**  
But sweet and tender lingers yet,  
Her kindly **deeds** night can't forget.  
And now perchance is faintly heard  
The frightened cry of night time bird,  
Or singing as the waves join hands  
And softly dance to meet the sands,  
As 'cross the sky's blue barred with **gold**  
Ochre tints and rose unfold,  
Crimson clouds, and violet **sheen,**  
Turquoise flecked with bright jade **green**  
Are painted there in the tranquil hush,  
And hang in the dusk at **evening** blush.

That **life could hold and give to** me  
The **wonders** round me that I see,  
**Is** something I have **pondered o'er,**  
And **yearn to** learn still more and more,  
**And oft I've asked what is this thing**  
In all the tender buds of spring  
That awes me so, and makes my eyes  
Fill up with tears at sunset skies?  
What master of the waves at sea  
Can make them roll eternally?  
What strange thing in the mountain air  
Can fill the heart of one with prayer?  
Then from the realms of infinite space  
I saw an angel's gleaming face,  
And softly played she on a harp  
Music low as throbbing heart,  
And sweetly came like an old, old song  
Notes that I have treasured long,  
From heavenly realms to earthly sod  
Came the answer, "It is God."

—Betty Coffin.

## A CHURCH

### (Second Prize Poem)

Oh, give me not a church of stone  
Where I may never pray alone,  
Where great resounding organs roar,  
And choirs rise and sing once more  
Their learned songs in unique chore.  
But let my temple be a hill,  
And let my heart with reverence fill  
With a robin for my choir  
Till my soul soars high and higher,  
Oh, let my sermon be a tree,  
And let me worship silently  
And feel at last God speaks to me!

—Betty Coffin.

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## IF

### (Third Prize Poem)

If sighs were words, they would disclose  
The sorrowing from which they rose.  
If sighs were words, unspoken grief  
Might in their breathing find relief.  
If sighs were words, the world could see  
To better lend its sympathy—  
If sighs were words.

—Alberta Reibenstein.

## "SHUT THE DOOR"

(First Prize Play)

A sketch of no particular importance or worth, just a conglomeration of words and an idea or two for no reason other than to use up a few sheets of paper and typewriter ink.

Rest assured that this play will not win the Pulitzer prize of '24.

The scene is in any so-called average American business office. They are all the same, so why bother to describe it to you who read the Saturday Evening Post or any such magazine. Of course, there is a desk, and at this desk we find one of the characters of the play. He is the American business man (the average, of course), and you will find a detailed description of him in last week's copy of the said magazines. Why waste precious paper telling you all about him? However, he is busy. (Who ever saw one who wasn't?) We must get into the spirit of the piece which is intended to be very brusque, (or is it brisk) and business-like. Of course, the play starts when the curtain goes up, and, thank goodness, we have no opening scene where the maid and the butler are engaged in a detailed discussion of the scandals surrounding the master and mistress. We are relieved not to hear opening lines to the effect that "there have been strange goings on in this house for some time" or "I may be just a hard working girl, but I have some pride," or "Don't tell a soul, but so and so did this and that and likewise ditto bang and what not." This, thank the gods, is not a problem play, except that it will be a problem to get anyone to read it. But stay—the curtain has risen, and we must get down to business.

Office boy (at door)—Beg pardon, sir, but—

Man at desk (working at paper which he does all through the play)—  
HHHHmmmmmmpppppppphhhhhhhhhh.

Office boy—I understand perfectly, sir, but there is ah—.

Man at desk—Huhhhh hhhheppppp.

Office boy—I think so, too, but there—.

Man at desk—Mmmmmmmmmmm.

Office boy—That's what I told him but—.

Man at desk—g-g-g-g-gg--g-s-s-s-s-s-sn-n-n-n-n-n.

Office boy—Yes, I think the Giants will win—but—.

Man at desk—Bbbbbbbbbblllllaaaaahhhhhh.

Office boy—I don't doubt it in the least—but to be I—.

Man at desk—zzz bbbb zzzzz bbbbbb.

Office boy—No, I like Buster Keaton much better—And by the way er er—.

Man at desk—Blahhh,—bluubb bbboohhhh.

Office boy—Yes, sir (turning to person outside). This way, sir.

(Enter Percy—He is not so bad as the name sounds—but he isn't any too good. He has just come from college—You know the kind—If you don't, it's your own hard luck, because we are not going to waste precious space and moments telling you. He is quite a lad.

Percy (extending hand and card, which man at desk takes—meaning the

card)—Jones is my name—J. Persimmons Jones—J for James,—rather commonplace so just call me Percy—.

Man at desk (using card to brush ashes from cigar off desk)—Gggguuuu-ggggg—uuuummmpppphhhhh.

Percy—I knew you would be glad to see me. It is indeed your good fortune that I dropped in.

Man at desk—B bbbllloowwiezzzznnnnngggg.

Percy—No doubt you are aware that I am just out of college—I thought you were. Well, here's a little secret for you—I was so smart that after attending two years the faculty unanimously voted that I already knew more than they could teach me and turned me out—I assure you that college has turned out many great men.

Man at desk—SZzzzowwwiiiiicee zubzzzuubbb.

Percy—I see you want to know why I am honoring you with my presence, but that is very easily explained. After considering all the places of business in this city, I decided that I might as well enter your employ as any other—So that's that,—all very clear and plausible.

Man at desk—\$\$'"/&&'¼¼?%%.

Percy—I've heard that one before. But of course you want to know what I ever did at college to warrant consideration.

Man at desk—Bblooies bblooi blung—.

Percy—Of course, you must let me tell you a few things about myself, the most interesting subject in the world to me. It was I who ruined a perfectly good suit of clothes that we might decorate old Zowie College with the colors of our school. It was I who neglected my studies, the easiest thing I do, in order that I might scatter a little joy among the fair co-eds of the school. Do you think I was selfish and confined myself to one? Far from it. I took them all out. Big-hearted me. I know all the college yells; in fact I sat up nights writing them! I was custodian of the Eta Beta Pi frat and knew all the signs.

Man at desk—BBBBllllllllllllllllllllnnnnnnngggggggg.

Percy—Rather than ask me what I can do, you should ask me what I can't do. I am not conceited, you can see, but am just soliciting for Me, Myself, and Company, Inc—(meaning either incorporated or incapable).

Man at desk—ZZZZZZiiiiiiiiiggggggggggg.

Percy—Of course, you are busy, but remember, sir, opportunity knocks but once and in these days of electric bells once the battery gives out, you're out of luck.

Man at desk (he might be asleep or very busy with his work—who knows and who cares)—ZZZZZZZZZZggggggggggg.

Percy—You must understand that what I am seeking is not such a plebeian thing as work—Far be it from such. We men of power should not refer to what we do as work, you know. What I desire is a position. Of course, you are racking your brain for some way in which you can accept my offer.

Percy—Herpicide will save it, so the barbers say.

Man at desk (smiles)—AAAljhhhhhhh.

Man as desk—ZZZZZZZZiiiiipppppppp (scratches bald spot on head).

Percy—But to continue and as our illustrious friend Shakespeare, or was it Ring Lardner, would say, “On with the play.” Believe it or not, you have reached a great point in your career. I have proved myself to you the outstanding figure of the rising generation—

Man at desk—ZZZZUUUUUUUBBBBB.

Percy—I knew that you would see that. But I repeat again, opportunity knocks but once, and unlike a bill collector will not call again. But stay—

Man at desk—GGGlllluuuubbbbb.

Percy—I see you are beginning to see the light. Why, sir, your very face is all aglow—or is that your natural complexion?

Man at desk—DDdddddduuuuuummmmmmmmm.

Percy—Hardly that, sir. But harken and hear my offer—I will condescend to enter your employ on the following conditions which are not subject to any recall, referendum, or amendment. My hours (get this now; it is vital) must be arranged so that my duties will in no way interfere with my daily (just like a newspaper, 365 days a year and 366 in Leap Year) morning golf or with my afternoon tea.

Man at desk (rising and showing signs of animation and human intelligence—it seems that he really is human)—BBBBlllluuuuubbbbbllllaaaahhhhh.

Percy—You have my proposition—I have spoken—Have you an opening for me?

Man at desk—(Ditto everything in previous speech and as much more as you can imagine without losing your dignity, or forgetting that you were brought up in a good moral atmosphere. As a hint we might tell you to say everything twice and then multiply by the result. This is a simple little method, and rest assured it will give you ultimate satisfaction. We would suggest more, but this is only a one-act play, and what more do you want?)

Percy—I have spoken, but I will speak again. You have heard my proposition—Have you an opening for me?

Man at desk (he is very calm and deliberate—he speaks and unlike our friend Juliet, he says something—It is a rare treat, indeed. We can see Matilda in the back row nudging her boy friend and telling him she knew all along that the Man at desk wasn’t dumb after all. Far from it; he isn’t as dumb as he looks. As a matter of fact he’s quite a lad. Fixed you that time—thought we were going to pull that old one about being dumber—but we aren’t as dumb as we look, either.) &55\$&/. (pause)

Percy—Well, spoken.

Man at desk—Yes, young man, I have an opening for you.

Percy—Jolly well, captain. When do I start?

Man at desk—And please don’t forget to close it when you go out (he drops utterly exhausted from such a long speech for a busy American business man).

Percy (leaving)—Oh, to be sure—Anything to please—. Well, ta-ta (exits and the opening closes very suddenly and abruptly).

Man at desk (resuming labors)—Bblllluuuuuubbbbbbbllllllaaaahhhhhhh (Blubs and blahs, and gugs, and zubs and zips and blings and zbs as

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

—Melvin Bennett.

## TIME WASTING HABITS

### A ONE-ACT PLAY

#### (Second Prize Play)

#### CHARACTERS:

JEAN BROWN, the sister;  
FRANK BROWN, the brother;  
MRS. BROWN, the mother.

SCENE: The curtain opens on a room very plainly furnished, but comfortable. A library table is in the center, on which are a few books and a lamp. At each end and at the back of the table are comfortable chairs. At either end of the room are windows: under one is a low seat; under the other is a shelf with flowers on it. Several pictures are on the walls. As the curtain opens, a girl is seen curled up in a chair, a book in hand.

#### ACT I—SCENE I

Frank (entering)—Say, Sis, did you mend my gloves as you promised?

Jean—Oh! dear, I forgot it. Wait just a minute, and I'll do it; I must finish this page.

(During this speech a dark clad figure to represent a thief, with a mask and his cap pulled low, enters the room unseen and records on the little clock on the shelf the time that it took Jean to say, "Just wait a minute.")

Frank—The same old excuse, "Wait just a minute," but never mind, I'll get another pair. (Leaves the room as his mother enters.)

Mother—Jean, dear, Mary and Ruth want to see you about the party tonight. They haven't time to come in and want you to come to the door.

Jean—Oh, all right, tell them to wait a minute; I must finish this—

(Figure again enters unseen.)

Mother—Hurry, dear, the girls are waiting.

(After a minute Jean leaves, and the mother sits by the table.)

Frank (at the door dressed for the street, sees mother and goes in and kisses her)—That's for the stitches, mother. But I have a lecture for you. You are spoiling Sis by doing all the little tasks that she puts off for just a minute. Why, she puts off everything until she can't be depended on any more.

Mother—I know, Frank, but I remind Jean all the time of her promises until it is easier to do it myself than to remind her.

Frank—Well, I'm going to try to cure the young lady of this habit. Send her in, mother, when she is through with her friends.

(As Mrs. Brown leaves at one door, Jean comes in the other.)

Jean—Oh! mother, Mary is going to wear her blue silk (looking around). Where's mother? I thought you had gone.

Frank—No, I have not gone yet, but sit down, Sis, I have something to say to you. Did you return the book you borrowed from Jimmie the other evening?

Jean—No, I'm going to in a—. (Figure is seen at door.)

Frank—Never mind the excuse, Jean. Excuses don't get you anywhere.



You are slipping behind.

Jean (angrily)—What do you mean?

Frank—Jean, it is just this: Everything you promise to do, you put off for just a minute, and then forget all about it until it is too late. The other day you promised mother you would bring chairs from the yard—and then put it off “just a minute” until it was too late, and rain had ruined them. The last few weeks that excuse has covered so many things. I don’t believe you could pass a single day without it, Sis.

Jean (angrily)—Oh! you think just because you are perfect, it is awful if someone else makes a mistake once in a while; don’t you?

Frank (laughing)—Once in a while! You had better say all the time. (Then seriously.) Say, Sis, you know the other day I heard father say that he could absolutely depend on me, and you know that it was the happiest minute of my life, and I determined then to try harder than ever to keep his trust. It’s a hard world, Jean, when folks lose their trust in you. (Mother enters with a dress over her arm. Frank walks to the window and looks out thoughtfully. The mother looks from one to the other.)

Mother—Jean, you wanted your rose-colored dress for tonight; didn’t you, dear? You will have to put it on so I can see how I can finish it.

Frank (walking to door)—John is out at the gate. I’ll see you later, Jean.

Jean (angry)—You needn’t bother, Mr. Perfect. I’ll put the dress on in a minute, mother.

(Figure enters and records time. Jean leaves the room. Mother stands and stares after them; then sinks into a chair near the table and talks to herself, meanwhile working on the dress.)

Mother—I don’t know what I shall do. Frank and Jean are continually quarreling over that question. I can’t blame Frank, for he is right. Jean can’t go on this way, and she is old enough to know it. No one except her family will stand for such a habit. I— (Interrupted by Jean.)

Jean—Where’s the dress, mother? I’ll be back in a minute. (Figure enters—the mother goes round room putting it in order. Jean enters.) Mother, can you fix the lace on the skirt like June’s? Hers looks so nice. And this waist doesn’t look right, does it? (Mother meanwhile putting in pins.)

Mother—No, dear, I just put it together so you could put it on, and I could see how to alter it. Does that look better, dear?

Jean—That’s fine, mother. Were you going to put that wide lace collar on it?

Mother—Yes, don’t you like that collar?

Jean—Oh, yes, it’s lovely.

Mother—All right, I think I have everything all right now. I don’t know whether I can finish it or not. You wasted so many minutes before you put it on.

Jean—I’ll take it right off. If you don’t get it finished, I suppose I’ll have to wear that old blue one. (Goes off stage. Mother finishes work. Jean enters, gives dress to mother.) Here it is. I don’t think any pins came out.

Mother—You’d better clean that spot off your sash, Jean. I won’t have time to clean it and finish the dress, too.

(Jean settles down with book.)

Jean—I will in a minute. (Figure enters—mother leaves Jean busy with her book—after a little while Frank comes in, crosses to the table, lays his cap on it, and goes around and stands by Jean's chair.)

Frank—Well, Sis, have you thought over what I told you before I left?

Jean (without looking up)—Oh! you think you know it all.

Frank—Jean, won't you please close that book and talk to me for a few minutes? (Jean closes book.) Jean, do you know you are making mother's duties harder because you put things off and she does them? Why, just now you wasted time for her when she wanted to fix your dress. (Jean does not look at her brother but out of window during speech.) Can't you see how you are making it hard for all of us?

Jean—Now, maybe mother can't get my dress finished, and I wasted time that she could have been working on it. I suppose I'll have to wear my old one, and it's mostly my own fault (looking at Frank). I'll tell you, Buddie, I'll try not to say it any more. I never will say it again.

Frank—Great! But I don't believe you can. The habit has grown on you, and you say it without meaning to.

Jean (getting up and going to table)—You don't! Well, you'll see.

Frank—Say, Jean, I'll tell you what I'll do. You remember that book marker uncle Jack sent me that you liked so well? If you can count seven days without having once made that excuse, I'll give you the marker. The days needn't come together, just so there are seven of them.

Jean—You might as well give it to me. It's mine already.

Mother (from next room)—Jean, dear, some one wants you at the telephone.

Jean—In just a min—. No, I'm coming.

(Figure is seen but leaves without changing clock.)

Frank—I told you so (as curtain closes).

## CURTAIN

### ACT I—SCENE II

SCENE: The same, one month later. Frank is seen busily writing at the table as the curtain rises.

Jean—Oh! Frank, I've won the book marker.

Frank—It's been a hard task; hasn't it, Sis?

Jean—Yes, and I'd never have accomplished it but for you. Every time I started to say those beastly words, you would stop me. Do you remember that first day? Even before you left the room, they flew out.

Frank—Yes, we have had a good time at it anyway, and I think the cure has cured.

Jean (smiling)—Do you remember the evening you laughed at me when father asked if I had written to auntie, and I started to say—? No, I won't even say it. You laughed at me and then pretended it was some huge joke in your book. But I don't blame you, Buddie.

Frank—Yes, Sis, but through it all you stuck to your purpose, no matter how hard it really was to forget those four little words. But after this experience I know you will always remember. I have been counting the days the same as you have, and I have the reward in my pocket (handing it to her).

Jean—It has been hard, but I think the last three days were the easiest. They all came together, and I never dreamed I could remember for three long days in a row. Thank you for the marker, Frank. But more than that, thank you for showing me how unbearable I was becoming with that good-for-nothing excuse. But please don't think I am going to forget. Now that I have this, I am going to try even harder, for I have both you and it to remind me. It's just the beginning. I'll leave you to your writing now.

Frank (as Jean leaves room)—I know you'll succeed now, Sis. (Resumes work. Mother enters—sits by window sewing. Frank sees her and goes to her.) Well, mother, my plan has worked.

Mother—What plan, Frank? You have so many.

Frank—The one about Jean and her "wait-a-minute's".

Mother—Oh!

Frank—Yes, I gave her the marker today, and she is so happy after waiting a whole month for only seven days.

Mother—Yes, dear, but it has been worth it, if she will only remember.

Frank—I think she will. She is determined now, and when Jean really wants to do a thing, she can do it.

Mother—Yes, Frank, this is one of the happiest days of my life. I am so glad you could see a way to help Jean. She has worried me so with that habit. Yes, Jean has a strong determination now to keep the marker honestly. I think she can do it, but you must keep on helping her, for she will need your help. Now, you'd better go and dress if you are going with the boys and girls tonight.

(Kisses his mother and leaves her looking happily out of the window as the curtain falls.)

THE END

—Ravella Platek.

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THE FORMAL

(Honorable Mention)

ACT I—SCENE I

Scene: A boy's bedroom. At the left are two windows, between which stands a table with a radio set on it. The door is at the back center; the dresser is at its right; a bed is at the left wall. A tennis racket and several pictures and pennants are on the walls. In a corner on the floor are baseballs, a bat, basket balls, helmet, etc.

Discovered—Burton Meyers, tuning in on his radio. Enter Melvin Morgan, who is about a senior in high school, good-looking, and very much excited.

Mel—Burt! Burt! Oh, say!

(Silence.)

Mel—Burt, listen! will you?

Burt—Be quiet. Can't you see I'm busy?

Mel—Oh, say. I'm in trouble. Won't you help me?

Burt (putting aside the radio)—What is it? Make it snappy. I just got

Philadelphia.

Mel—Philadelphia be hanged! Got a date for tonight?

Burt—Sure, I'm going to the formal. Aren't you?

Mel—I don't know. Whom are you taking?

Burt—Vi, of course.

Mel—Oh, gee!

Burt—Why, what's the trouble?

Mel—Well, you know I asked Flo to go to this dance with me. She said she couldn't go, as she was to spend the week-end with El in San Francisco. So I asked Jane Ashley to go, and she accepted.

Burt—What's wrong with that?

Mel—Listen. About an hour ago Flo phoned and said she would go with me. That means two. What'll I do?

Burt—That's simple—.

Mel (eagerly)—What—?

Burt—Take them both.

Mel—Oh, is that all? I thought of that, but none of us would have a good time. Anyway, I'm going steady with Flo, and I don't want her to know I asked Jane.

Burt—Leave Jane at home.

Mel—Yes, and have her get sore and tell everybody. I'm likely to.

Burt—Get sick.

Mel—But I don't want to miss the dance.

Burt—Just one won't hurt you.

Mel—Say, do you know anyone who's not going?

Burt—Sure.

Mel (anxiously)—Who?

Burt—Sam Hickson.

Mel—Gee, you're encouraging. Think Jane would go with him? I should say not!

Burt—Well,—there's Bob Lewis. He's good-looking.

Mel—Oh, sure, good-looking enough, but I'm not that mean to Jane.

Burt—She likes Jimmy well enough.

Mel—Jimmy! Sure! Where's the 'phone?

Burt—In the hall.

(Exit Mel. He can be seen at the 'phone in the hall.)

Mel (calling)—Say, what's his number?

Burt (who has gone back to his radio)—Whose?

Mel—Whose do you suppose? Jimmy's, of course.

Burt—I don't know. Look it up.

Mel—Where's the book?

Burt—Some place there. You're probably sitting on it.

(Mel gets up and takes the book from the chair.)

—Let's see. D-r-a-i-s-5056J.

Burt—Yes, that's it.

Mel—It's a wonder you wouldn't tell me before.

Burt—What? I can't hear you.

Mel (sarcastically)—That's too bad. Central? 5056J. Yes, please.

Hello, Jimmy? Mel speaking. Got a date tonight? Yes, I know it's late, but I'm hard up. Got one? Hurray! Listen, want to go to the formal? Oh, gee! why not? Well, get it back. You're not going back on me just because he borrowed your dress suit? It's Jane. Jane Ashley. Yes. You won't go? All right, I'll try him. Thanks. Good-bye.

Burt—What's he say?

Mel—He said to try Bill (telephoning) 3268J. Hello, may I speak to Bill? He's out of town? Thank you.

Burt—Out of town?

Mel—I'm sick all right. I'm going home.

Burt (aside)—Poor kid! Say, Mel, I'm expecting my brother Jack home from college tonight. He'd have to take her out, but he might bring a friend.

Mel—We'll hope so, but I give up.

(He sits in silence. The phone rings.) Hello! Mel? I'm speaking. I mean this is Mel. Mother? Oh, yes. What? I was coming home anyway. What's the rush? I'm sick, ma, I'm coming home to go to bed. All right, I'm coming. Good-bye.

Burt—Your mother?

Mel—Yes. She says to come home.

Burt—Well, I hope you come out O. K. I'll let you know if Jack brings anyone.

Mel—All right. Don't come down. Good-bye.

#### CURTAIN

#### Scene II

Scene: The library of a clubhouse. Music can be heard in the ballroom. Different groups in evening dress are sitting or standing. All are chatting merrily. At left front are Burt, Vi, Mel, Flo, Jack, Grace, Art, and Jane.

Mel—Art, have you met Grace? Miss Williams, Art Stewart. He's an old chum of mine, just dropped in on me from Stanford. Jack you've met before?

Jack—Surely, I know Art. Now we're all acquainted, I claim Grace. This is my dance, you know, Grace.

Grace—Yes, I know.

Art—Suppose we join them on the floor, Miss Ashley.

Jane—Willingly.

(Grace, Jack, Jane, and Art go out left.)

Bert—I thought you were ill when you left this afternoon, Mel. You look all right now.

Mel—Yes, but I suddenly recovered when I got home. It was so good to see Art that I got over it.

Bert—That's good. I thought you would feel better after you had rested a while. Did you know Art was coming?

Mel—No, I asked him to come up anytime, and he just happened to drop in this week end.

Flo—Oh, Mel, isn't it just lovely that there is a formal while he is here?

Mel (looking at Bert)—Yes, Flo, just lovely.

#### CURTAIN

—Elizabeth Gibbens.